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ABSTRACT

Special writing problems faced by English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) adult literacy students are examined, and an approach to the individual teacher-student writing conference is proposed. Four conference components are distinguished, and suggestions are made for handling each: oral interaction; engaging the student in dialogue before reading the writing sample; reading the student's text; and negotiation of revisions. Recommended strategies for oral interaction include: patience; creation of a comfortable speaking environment; having students reformulate ideas orally; explaining conference expectations; avoiding yes/no questions; and avoiding all suggestion of cultural superiority. Pre-reading dialogue strategies include: asking the student what needs work; examining writing prompts and sample texts together; making the student aware of his responsibility to contribute to the conference; and providing a text copy. Text reading strategies include: prioritizing issues to be addressed; following the student's agenda; and explaining editing marks. Revision negotiation strategies include: demanding feedback; having the student describe how a writing choice meets audience expectations; using models and examples to introduce unknown writing skills; and requiring on-the-spot reformulation and a specific plan of action. Some organizational problems in writing are also discussed. Contains seven references. (MSE) (Adjunct ERIC Clearinghouse on Literacy Education)

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Adult Literacy Independent Learning Packet

STRATEGIES FOR WORKING ONE-ON-ONE WITH ESL ADULT LITERACY WRITERS

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June 1996

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STRATEGIES FOR WORKING ONE-ON-ONE WITH ESL ADULT LITERACY WRITERS

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INTRODUCTION: The Trouble with ESL Writing Conferences

As ESL educators, one of the more difficult tasks we face is how best to utilize our one-on-one conferences with our ESL students. Because each student is unique and each faces different challenges with his or her individual writings, no single conferencing method exists that can meet the needs of every student. In many ways, conferencing has become an art in which the teacher almost intuitively recognizes students' needs and guides them towards revision strategies without really recognizing the reasons behind these suggestions. As a result, many ESL teachers doubt the effectiveness of their conferences, often feeling as if they either failed to address key problems in their students' writings or that they spent too much time fixing the problems for their students rather than showing their students how to fix their problems on their own.

My purpose in this guide is to examine the special writing problems ESL adult literacy students face and offer an approach to conferencing with ESL students about their writing. Like other adults facing literacy issues, ESL students often have little or no background in reading and writing upon which to draw a frame of reference as they attempt to develop their writing skills. Unfortunately, our ESL students also face the additional burden of having to develop their writing in an alien language, doubling their cognitive load because they lack a basic familiarity with the English language and American cultural conventions that native-speaker adult learners have. As a result, our ESL students are even further removed from understanding levels of formality, audience expectations, and all of the other elements that govern our writing tasks.

Because ESL students lack an intuitive knowledge of English, our job should be to act as informants for our students by offering explicit suggestions on how to improve their individual

texts. These suggestions should be made in response to input from the students themselves so that revision strategies can be negotiated to fit the intentions of the students while adhering to the expectations of the intended audience. By explaining in clear language how their individual texts do not adhere to English conventions and offering a range of detailed models of revision options from which they can make the best choice for their intended meaning, we can demystify for our ESL students the "hidden" rules of English academic writing *without* appropriating their texts.

What follows is a summary of the research I investigated and a detailed explanation of the strategies I have come to use in ESL conferences. A complete list of sources can be found in Appendix A.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

The difficulties with writing faced by ESL students can seem overwhelming to both the students and their teachers. Judith K. Powers, in her landmark essay "Rethinking Writing Center Conferencing Strategies for the ESL Writer," points out that one of the biggest challenges for ESL students is simply overcoming their own native language's (L_1) rhetorical conventions as they try to adjust their writing for the expectations of their new discourse community (41). Citing R. B. Kaplan's research into contrastive rhetoric,[1] Eugene P. Vricella lists some of the potential

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[1]For more detailed information about Contrastive Rhetoric, see Kaplan's *The Anatomy of Rhetoric: A Prolegomena to Functional Theory of Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Center for Curriculum Development, 1972).

types of rhetoric ESL students might employ instead of English's linear style: Semitic languages are noted for their parallelism, Asian languages for their circular reasoning, and Romance languages for their digressive style (10). As a result, basic issues in English writing such as thesis placement, types and amounts of evidence used, and use of direct language may conflict with the student's L_1. In an attempt to design a special writing curriculum for international linguistics graduate students, Vricella surveyed the faculty that worked with the students and found that the students were thought to have trouble framing a research question, difficulty taking an individual stand instead of simply citing authorities, problems referring to sources, and struggled to maintain a coherent argument (6). These difficulties can be seen as primarily a conflict between the L_1 and L_2 (English) rhetorical styles in which ESL students have either not learned the conventions of English or have not been able to set aside their own language's writing conventions.

In addition to rhetorical difficulties, as ESL students advance in their command of English, their need to express increasingly complex thoughts inevitably leads to the use of language that George Q. Xu calls "un-English" (3). Citing Stephen D. Krashen's Input Hypothesis,[2] Xu points out that ESL students often use words, phrases, or grammatical constructions incorrectly because their lack of exposure to comprehensible input using these forms of English has not adequately taught them the connotations, denotations, and exceptions to the rules that native speakers have acquired over time (4). As a result, ESL students express themselves in an "interlanguage" that combines the structure and phrases of their L_1 with the vocabulary and grammatical rules of their

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[2]See Krashen's *Writing: Research, Theory, and Application* (Oxford: Pergamon, 1984) for more information on the Input Hypothesis and Krashen's "Natural Approach" to language acquisition.

L_2, English (4). This interlanguage can result in the direct translations of L_1 sayings, awkwardly constructed sentences that try to express complex ideas within the limits of their English vocabulary, or over-generalizations of grammatical rules (5). Thus, even beyond the straightforward grammatical and vocabulary errors, ESL students can create awkwardly un-English, but often grammatically correct, language that interferes with the reader's ability to comprehend the text.

The traditional ways that teachers have tried to cope with such difficulties have left much to be desired. Vivian Zamel's study of 15 teachers' response to ESL text concludes that the most prevalent feedback teachers give to these students is error correction (84). Helen S. Huntley concurs with this opinion, citing A. N. Applebee's 1981 study of secondary school teachers in which 80% of the teachers in the survey "ranked mechanical errors as the most important criterion for responding to student writing" (4).[3] Because of this preoccupation, teachers often offer revision suggestions that are ineffective according to Zamel: "They are in fact so distracted by language-related local problems that they often correct these without realizing that a much larger meaning-related problem has totally escaped their notice" (86). In search of local error, teachers often misread the point of a text, offer inconsistent reactions to the overall argument, make contradictory comments, are rarely text-specific when they point out error, and neglect to offer specific revision strategies beyond the correction of surface error (Zamel 86). Even worse, Huntley observes that even "overt correction" of surface errors "tended to have negative side effects on . . . the quality of subsequent compositions" (7). While Huntley fails to mention what

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[3]Applebee's complete report is entitled "Writing in the Secondary School" (NCTE Research Rep. 21, 1981).

these side effects are, one can surmise that while bringing attention to the error helps the student somewhat, simple correction without any problem-solving by the student does not help the student to develop ways of dealing with the error in future writing tasks.

In response to these myopic concerns with error-correction, many ESL educators called for a more interactive conferencing style that would allow the students to express their intentions for a text and develop problem-solving skills on how best to fit their intentions to the discourse community they seek to enter. Margaret J. Marshall, an ESL educator that has made conferencing the centerpiece of her composition courses, points out that she "cannot decide [what revision strategies to suggest] without the student explaining the intention, clarifying the meaning, or putting the writing into the context of his own life" (11). By asking questions about the meaning of a passage or an overall argument, instructors can avoid misinterpreting the text and offer more effective alternatives that address the intended meaning rather than the surface errors. Indeed, Huntley points out that we should focus more on the meaning of a passage rather than the grammatical problems because "error correction in the early stages of drafting is redundant, since revision [to more accurately reflect the intended meaning] is likely to change the grammatical construction" (8). By drawing ESL students into a dialogue about their intentions and their difficulties, we can simultaneously get them to express and analyze their own rhetorical goals and offer them a choice of options best suited to their needs, placing the ultimate decision about revision back into their hands. Equally important, both Huntley and Marshall note that students respond more enthusiastically to the revision process when they have an active role in the decision-making process (Huntley 14, Marshall 10).

While many of the articles that argue the benefits of an interactive conferencing style cite

anecdotal evidence to support their claims, a more systematic study by Goldstein and Conrad substantiates the critical role of negotiated revisions in the conferencing process. Dismayed that the majority of the research on conferencing effectiveness focused solely on evaluations of the conference and not the subsequent revisions that resulted, Goldstein and Conrad actually recorded conferences and correlated the types of revision suggestions with the final draft of the paper.[4] What they discovered was that in almost every case where the student and teacher negotiated what the nature of the problem in a specific area of the text was and which revision strategy out a variety of options would best convey the meaning, the revision was successful (452). Suggestions prompted solely by the teacher with little response from the student met with mixed success (454). As a result of these findings, Goldstein and Conrad determined that while conferencing can be beneficial, "conferences do not necessarily result in student input" (456), resulting in limited revisions because the student did not actively participate in the decision making process. Merely instructing students in what needs to be done to "fix" the paper is not enough; ESL conferences must draw students into a dialogue that involves them in the final revision decisions made about their texts. While these negotiations may take more time than we typically allot to conferences, in the long run students will improve more quickly because they will have actively problem-solved instead of passively repeating (and forgetting) what we as teachers tell them.

From the perspective of a composition instructor of native-speakers, the presumption of a

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[4]I would be remiss in failing to point out that this study involved only three ESL students. Goldstein and Conrad are careful to point out that "we must be cautious in extending the conclusions of these studies to ESL student-teacher conferences" partially because of this limitation (445).

student-teacher dialogue in all conferencing situations seems natural enough, but a difficulty arises when we deal with ESL students because often the revision strategies we find ourselves offering them seem a lot more dictatorial than those we might suggest to a native-speaker. Where we might ask a native-speaker who has no clear main idea in his paper "Where is your thesis?" we might bluntly have to tell a novice ESL student "You need a thesis." ESL students come to us precisely to hear such advice, yet as Powers points out, because we see native-speaker students who seek such advice as "lazy" or teachers who make such comments as being non-interactive, our instincts resist giving such blunt answers to those students who really need to hear them (43). We likewise constantly fear that we might be appropriating the writings of ESL students by offering specific changes needed to bring the paper more in line with the rhetorical conventions of the academic discourse community. But as both Powers and Joy Reid point out, we need to see ourselves as "cultural informants" who have a responsibility to try and help flesh out the ESL student's understanding of English and its rhetorical conventions (Reid 275). To do so, we must be more explicit in our advice than we are used to being. While the need to offer specific examples of revisions is unavoidable, to novice ESL composition teachers, it seems completely incompatible with an interactive conferencing style because it appears to dictate revision rather than negotiate revision options. As a result, ESL teachers can feel caught in a Catch-22, and if they are like I was, they can feel that they are of absolutely no use to an ESL student.

To help me strike a balance between acting as a linguistic informant to ESL students and as a teacher who engages them in a dialogue about revision, I have used the preceding research and my own personal experience as an ESL teacher to formulate the following loose guideline for handling ESL writing conferences. The underlying assumption is that a teacher can offer an ESL

student specific explanations of a rhetorical difficulty by doing the following:

- Eliciting an explanation of the intended meaning from the student.
- Pointing out how the text fails to communicate that meaning given the rhetorical expectations of the discourse community.
- Negotiating with the student the best possible revision strategies from a range of options designed to convey meaning in response to the specified needs of the target audience.

By explaining the general rule ("Your audience generally expects your thesis to come at the end of the first paragraph where it clearly states your main point"), the student then must take the responsibility to reformulate his or her text to meet this criteria, and the two of us can evaluate the revision, offer alternatives, and engage in solution-finding together.

THE CONFERENCE

Introduction:

Over time I have come to see writing conferences as consisting of four main issues: spoken interaction, pre-reading dialogues, the actual reading of the text, and revision negotiation. In the following discussion, I have tried to organize my points around these issues, but because elements from each issue permeate the others, we should recognize that conferences require us to often combine and modify strategies to meet the needs of the individual student. Given the variety of educational backgrounds, levels of exposure to authentic oral and written English,

cultural expectations, and motivations for improvement, we have to be very flexible in how we approach our ESL students. The older student who seems barely literate could have been a professor in his or her own country, while the unaccented business professional who talks your ear off may not be able to string three words together on the page. Beware of assuming that your student does not need advice in certain matters while at the same time assuming that because he or she may speak with a broken accent, they do not know anything. The danger of misjudging the needs of your ESL student requires that you engage the student in a dialogue not only to involve the student in problem solving, but also to allow you to have a clearer picture of his or her needs without embarrassing yourself or your student. As you read the following suggestions, consider how they can help you more effectively size up your student, which suggestions you can safely ignore with more advanced students, and which strategies can help you to help bring your student to a clearer understanding of English writing conventions and language use.

After this discussion of methodology I have included a script of a sample conference in which I try to demonstrate some of my suggestions in a more practical way.

Spoken Interaction:

Of particular concern to both ESL students and teachers is the role of speaking in a conference. While some ESL students may be perfectly comfortable talking with their teachers, others seem reluctant to speak. We need to be patient if they are not quick to initiate or respond to conversation; often ESL students are reluctant to express themselves orally because they still have trouble with pronunciation. In conferences, I try to let students know that I am not

concerned with their pronunciation, but rather with their ability to communicate with me about their papers. To help create this environment, I slow down my own speech and avoid correcting their speaking errors. Occasionally, if a student is trying to express an idea within the confines of their vocabulary, I ask "Do you mean _____?" to clarify what the student is trying to say, but generally I try to avoid completing their sentences so that I don't discourage them from expressing their own thoughts or prematurely end their thought process on a particular issue. Likewise, it is not rude to ask a student "Can you repeat that? I did not quite get it," if the question is asked in a non-threatening manner. Such requests for reformulation often promote further discussion on an issue that helps the student work around his or her own difficulties by talking it out. The bottom line for me when speaking with students is that if we demonstrate our patience with their accent, students often will relax and actually speak more freely, creating the ideal conditions for a dialogue.

On the other hand, despite our best efforts to create a comfortable speaking environment, some students will remain reluctant to talk. As Goldstein and Conrad have observed, what we may be facing in such situations is the student's cultural expectation that as teachers, we will simply tell them what to do (456). To get around this problem, we may have to explicitly teach them how to respond to an open-ended question by telling them that our educational style places value on student input and requires students to interact with the teacher. I generally try to facilitate their understanding of this process by avoiding "yes/no" questions and following up on a question with "why?" so that remaining passive is difficult. While getting ESL students to work around their own cultures' expectations of instructors may be difficult, unless we are explicit about how and why we conference, the students will more than likely never see a context or a

need for changing their expectations of the teacher's role or their own in the learning process.

Given that these types of cultural conflicts are almost inevitable with ESL students, as writing tutors I feel that the most important issue that we face throughout the conferencing process is the tone we take as we try to shift students' writing behavior to meet the expectations of American discourse. We must remember to show respect for the rhetorical conventions of the students' home cultures; if not carefully handled, our advice may seem as if we are telling the students that their culture is "wrong" while ours is "right." By emphasizing that neither rhetorical style is better, but rather just different, we can avoid alienating our students while setting up a context in which our advice merely shows "how we do it here in the United States." Also, by explicitly pointing out the differences in rhetorical styles to ESL students, we can, as Xu notes, reassure them that they are not 'slow' because they are struggling, but rather are experiencing "growing pains" as they shift from one cultural context to another (5). By presenting this struggle as a natural part of ESL language acquisition, we can sooth any concerns they may have about themselves and even trace their progress as they struggle to use more complex forms of English (Xu 6).

- Speaking Strategies:

1. *Be patient!* Be willing to wait for a student response.
2. *Create a comfortable speaking environment.* Slow your speech down. Reassure the student that you aren't worried about his or her pronunciation. Avoid finishing sentences for the student.

3. *Request Reformulation.* By getting your students to restate their ideas in different ways, you can both clarify their intentions and promote further thought.

4. *Teach conference expectations.* Because of their culture's beliefs about the role of the teacher, some ESL students may need to be taught that they can converse with the teacher and not just receive lectures passively.

5. *Avoid Yes/No Questions.* These questions promote student passivity. If you must use them, follow up with "why?" when they answer.

6. *Avoid "cultural superiority" at all costs!* Be sure to reassure students that the English conventions you are teaching them are not better then their own language's rules; they are only different.

Pre-Reading Dialogues:

When I first sit down to conference with ESL students, I always start by asking what they think they need to work on. This simple question forces them to take the initiative in the conference by analyzing their own needs and engaging me in a dialogue with them instead of me taking control. In my experience, ESL students usually have fairly specific issues they would like to address, but if they do not, the best way to elicit a response is to ask what sort of issues their teachers, employers, or co-workers have raised about their writing. Barring any major writing problems in the text, I feel it is better to follow their agenda; doing so increases their active involvement in the conference.

I also ask to see a copy of the writing prompts the teacher has passed out and ask students

to explain in their own words what they think the teacher expects in their response. According to Reid, one of the biggest difficulties ESL students have is interpreting the expectations implied by the key words in a topic statement (483). If it appears that a student does not understand the key words, I generally hold off explanations until after I have read the paper to see if in fact he or she has not satisfactorily met the expectations of the assignment so that we can discuss any problems in fulfilling these expectations in the context of the paper later on in the conference.

If the student is more worried about non-academic writing, such as office communications, I ask the student to provide models of this type of writing which we can analyze together to build a model of what sorts of expectations are demanded from these types of texts. By reading the samples together and asking students to explain why they think the original writer made certain choices, students can start building their own model of what the expectations are rather than trying to memorize what I might tell them. An example of such a model can be found in Appendix B.

Finally, before we actually sit down to look at the paper, I make a photocopy of the student's draft so that both of us can read the paper silently to ourselves. In an ideal world, we would have the student read their papers out loud, but because of the inherent problems with pronunciation faced by many ESL students, time does not usually permit us to read it aloud. As we read, I have the student mark any areas he or she feels needs work. If the student protests that he or she cannot judge what is wrong, I ask the student to mark items that he or she has been marked down for on previous papers or items that he or she feels are "un-English." While a lot of the problems in the draft will be ignored, I have found that when students are asked to judge their own work in this manner, they pinpoint a lot more problems than we might expect from someone

still decoding our rhetorical styles. By involving them in the evaluation process, our ESL students can start to develop a feel for what works in their writing and what does not.

By the time the student and I actually start reading, what I hope I have done through this dialogue is made the student aware of his or her responsibility in the conference to interact with me and the text while creating an environment in which the student feels as comfortable with this responsibility as possible. The majority of the time, this pre-reading dialogue does just that for me, but occasionally (as with my native speaker tutorees), nothing I do makes a difference. In such cases, we have to recognize that past a certain point, we cannot force a dialogue on a student who doesn't want one. What we can do, however, is make sure that any cultural or L_1 problems that may be interfering with their ability to engage in a dialogue have been addressed so that the ESL student can have the same choice to engage in negotiation that our native-speaker students have.

- Pre-Reading Dialogue Strategies:

1. *Ask what the student thinks needs to be worked on.* Have the student express both what he or she is worried about and what problems have been identified by teachers, employers, and co-workers.
2. *Examine writing prompts and sample texts with the student.* By analyzing the cues in writing prompts with the student or the strategies used by writers, together you and the student can build a model of what expectations are linked to a specific writing task.
3. *Make the student aware of the responsibility to contribute to the conference.*

4. *Photocopy the essay*. Both of you should be reading the essay at the same time. Doing so reinforces the idea that you both are critiquing the text together rather than placing authority solely in the hands of the teacher.

Reading the Text:

One of the major problems I have faced when I actually read an ESL paper is that often students watch me read and mark their writing instead of reading their own copy silently to themselves. To compensate for this problem (which also happens with native speakers tutorees), I warn the student ahead of time not to be concerned with the marks I make on their paper as we are reading because I will be marking both good areas and areas that need work. I also try to turn away from students as I read so that they have as limited a line of sight to my copy of the paper as possible, further removing their ability to watch what I am doing. If I do not do this, I find that ESL students are especially prone to circling items on their copies that I have circled, even when I have circled them because I particularly liked that part of the paper. By limiting their access to what I am doing, I force them to evaluate their writing instead of simply parroting me.

Once we both have finished reading, I silently prioritize any problems that may be in the essay before asking the student to generalize about the problems he or she found. As students outline what areas need to be changed, I praise them when they identify particularly complicated errors rather than mere surface errors so that I reinforce their sense of what types of difficulties need to take precedence over others. If I feel that the student has missed a major issue, I point it out and get his or her feedback on it. After that, we will start to negotiate our way through the

problems he or she has identified and then work on the issues I have identified.

In addition to these preparations, I take a few seconds to explain the marks that I have made on my copy of the text. While we may assume that our checks and crosses speak for themselves, for many students, particularly ESL students, these marks can be very confusing. I likewise take care to make sure that when I write comments, they are clear (but short) sentences that will not confuse the student. I avoid abbreviations at all cost. Finally, I like to visually link repeated problems by drawing a line to the previous example of the same error. This helps students to build up a schema of what the error looks like as they go back to revise. In order for these marks to be helpful, though, we need to take the time to explain them to our students so that we do not add to their confusion.

- Reading Strategies:

1. *Prioritize issues to be dealt with.* During a first conference, remember to focus on the larger issues of organization, audience expectation, and content rather than local grammar errors. Since revision often changes grammatical structures anyway, identifying minor errors is often a waste of time.
2. *Follow the student's agenda as much as possible.* By dealing with the student's concerns, you will involve him or her more fully in the conference and increase the likelihood that the negotiated revision strategies will actually be used both in the current text and in future writings.
3. *Explain Marks.* The marks you make on their papers may only add to the confusion for ESL

students. Be sure to explain both positive and negative marks, use complete sentences in written comments, and link repeated grammatical errors visually with a line to help them spot their own patterns of error.

Revision Negotiation:

Once both the student and I have finished reading the text and have discussed what our priorities for revision are, the difficult task of engaging in actual negotiation begins. Since each ESL paper will naturally have different issues to deal with, what I have done in this section is created several revision categories and organized some suggestions on how to help clarify the problem to students without simply rewriting the paper for them. The underlying assumption for all of these suggestions is that they will be presented to the student in terms of audience expectation: the expectations of a particular academic or social discourse community in the United States. Our ESL students need to be made aware that the writing they might do in a college-level English class differs radically in the tone, types of facts presented, length, and purpose from an inter-office memo, a personal letter, or any other type of writing because the audience being written to expects different types of language, formality, and levels of detail. No amount of grammar instruction will help them become better writers if they cannot vary their writings to match their audiences.

For all of the following suggestions, if the student seems to not be able to formulate a revision strategy, I found that it is necessary and acceptable that we model for students possible alternatives to their text in order to clarify the revision we are suggesting. As Xu points out,

reformulation of student text provides our students with exposure to authentic English upon which they can start to build a better understanding of the often abstract rules we toss about in conferences (5). What we have to be careful of when we model a particular strategy, however, is that we do not simply write down a better way of stating an idea and move on to the next issue in the paper. We should offer at least two examples and then require the student to reformulate his or her original idea using the models as a guide. In this fashion, we can make concrete the abstract rule *without* rewriting or appropriating our students' texts.

- General Negotiation Strategies:

1. *Demand feedback.* Compel the student to initiate discussion with comments like "What did you like?" and "What bothers you?" Guiding questions such as "What about this section?" are fine if you cannot get the student to initiate discussion. The only way to make sure the students are actively engaged in the revision negotiation is to keep them talking.
2. *Ask the student to describe how a writing choice meets audience expectations.* By entering into a dialogue about audience, we can emphasize both the need to imagine audience expectations and actually lead the students through the process by agreeing with or objecting to their audience assumptions.
3. *Use models and examples to introduce unknown writing skills.* To introduce a new concept method, do not be afraid to give several examples to show the student what your suggestion entails. Try not to give them the exact answer that solves their writing

problem; instead, show them something similar and ask them to use it as a guide.

4. *Require on the spot reformulation and a specific plan.* Once a model has been shown or a strategy suggested, ask students how they plan to revise a specific section based on these examples. Depending on time limitations, you might even have the student do some of the revisions in front of you so that you can see that he or she has a plan in mind and understands what needs to be done.

Organization issues:

Given the vast differences in various cultures' rhetorical styles, troubles with organization and argument structure may be the most common problems faced by ESL students. In many ways, the traditional questions we ask native speakers may help to clarify these issues by forcing ESL students to consider their organization in terms of English discourse:

- Where is your main idea most clearly expressed?
- What is the main point of this paragraph?
- Where is your evidence to support this claim?

If the students cannot answer these questions, before simply telling them the answer, ask them what they think English rhetoric requires given the purpose of the paper. Should they give the correct answer, ask them to look at their paper and show how they see their paper fulfilling this expectation and begin negotiation on what changes should be made by having the student reformulate their ideas in front of you. If they cannot describe the English rhetorical pattern, a brief explanation of the appropriate issue should follow, along with a model of how this would

look in a paper.

To help clarify organizational problems, Vricella recommends the use of a marginal outline to clarify linear structure (11), a strategy I found successful in many cases. After explaining that a basic linear argument makes its case by having each individual point serve as a stepping stone to the next point, I have students mark in the margins the main idea they want each paragraph to express. If they cannot explain how each point connects to the points that precede and follow it, the outline can help our ESL students to self-diagnosis by showing where they may have too many ideas in one paragraph or ordering problems. After the diagnostic outline is completed, I like to have the students draw up a new one that uses the same ideas, but reorganizes them more effectively. By asking students why they put certain paragraphs together and not others, I have found I can prompt them to reflect on the connections between paragraphs and how these connections build increasing support for the overall argument. I also will sometimes offer alternative outlines to the students so that they can see how an argument's organization can shift the overall meaning of the paper. By discussing the range of options with the student and their potential effects, the student can develop a repertoire of organizational options for future use.

In the same vein, I have found that a "thesis card" works well to help ESL students to keep their texts focused, be they academic, professional, or personal writings. On a 3"x5" index card, I have ESL students write their main point down and then compare it to what they actually wrote in each paragraph. This technique visually links the idea of "thesis" with their text, allowing them to see where they may have gone off on a tangent. If the thesis card says that the point of the paper is "American food is terrible for you" but the paragraph being inspected states that "The American salad bar is a healthy haven for everyone," the student can visually see the

contradicting statements side by side and start to plan the appropriate revisions. Best of all, the technique can work both in and out of conferences, and it places the primary responsibility for diagnosing organizational problems on the student.

In addition, we should be aware that ESL students seem to have trouble with two other organization issues as well:

- **Evidence**: ESL students may need to be told when to use and not use anecdotal, statistical, and quoted evidence. They also may need to be told when they have not given enough evidence and when they have given too much, since different cultures often emphasize either abstract observations over facts or a citation of every available fact. They also may have to be shown the mechanics of quotations and paraphrasing.
- **Transitional words and phrases**: Many cultures do not place a value on the use of transitional devices between and within paragraphs and may even find it insulting to the reader. We need to establish the convention and reassure our ESL students that transitions are polite and expected. We may also have to model the use of transitions so that they can get a feel for when they are required.

While these organizational issues do not by any means exhaust the possible problems that may arise in an ESL conference, they do cover the majority I have faced. When I do encounter other problems with organization, I follow the same basic pattern as I do with the problems I am familiar with: I get students to express their perception of the English strategy, have them reconsider their text in light of their own explanation if they understand the problem, or I explain and model the abstract rule before asking the student to rework the model to best express their own idea.

- Organizational Strategies:

1. *Remind students that English writing is linear in style*. Because many cultures structure their rhetoric around non-linear arguments, students may have to be explicitly taught what linear progression means. The use of outlines to help clarify how a linear argument works should help.
2. *Use marginal outlines and "thesis cards" to help students self-diagnosis*. By having students outline their already written text in the margins, students can help trace the linear progression of their papers and find where this progression breaks down. Thesis cards can help students to compare individual paragraphs with their main points so that they can track and correct tangents.
3. *Remind students about the proper use of transitions and evidence*. Again, because of cultural differences, ESL students may resist the conventions of English regarding transitions and evidence. Reassure students that these differences do not deligitimize their own language's rhetorical preferences and remind them that they are trying to communicate with an audience that expects evidence and transitions to be handled a certain way. See Appendix C for a list of potential transitions.

<u>Awkward Language</u>:

The other main issue I find most tutors have to deal with in ESL conferences is the issue of awkward or grammatically incorrect language. As noted earlier, because ESL students often

have trouble with sentence level mechanics, the temptation for the ESL teacher is to focus the conference on small-scale error correction. Unfortunately, such suggestions fail to help students correct the broader issues they are more likely to face. Before dealing with awkward language, we should make sure that we have identified and dealt with major revision suggestions first, such as content additions/deletions, organization, and the like. Only after these issues are dealt with should grammatical and other "un-English" issues be addressed. In all likelihood, given the often extensive revisions that result from these negotiated strategies, the grammar and sentence level problems will change anyway, negating the benefit of spending a long time discussing them. In the event that there are serious language issues, I generally try to schedule another conference when possible to deal with them after major revision has taken place.

After awkward language has been identified by either the student or the tutor, what to do about correcting the problem has become a subject of debate. Powers argues that to have students read the troubled area out loud is a waste of time since students do not have an ear for English (41-42), but Zamel argues strenuously that students should be compelled to read awkward phrase or sentences aloud to make sure that what they have written matches what they actually intended to say (86). I have found that ESL students have more of an ear for error than Powers gives them credit for, and since reading aloud heightens their sensitivity to their English, reciting their own sentences enhances their ability to monitor and self-correct their written English. Reading aloud also helps students to further develop an ear for error by having their senses physically experience the sound of an awkward or incorrect phrase.

When offering suggestions on how to correct awkward areas, tutors need to bear in mind two factors. Often advanced ESL students know the rules of English grammar better than the

teacher does, creating a possibly embarrassing situation for the teacher if they cannot do more than just say "it sounds wrong." Teachers also need to recognize that detailed analysis of the semantics of a word choice or grammar rule is of little or no value to the student (Xu 8); ESL students learn more effectively in a conference through models of proper context. Thus, after a rule has been explained and options given, we can best serve our students by letting them reformulate their ideas using the models as a guide than we can giving in to the temptation of discussing language in the abstract (Xu 7).

When I do focus on grammatical and "un-English" issues, I tend to address one example of a repeated problem and then have the student correct any repetitions of the problem on their own. Thus, during a conference if a student has consistently substituted the past tense of the verb "to have" for the present tense, I will go over it once with the student in detail and then have him or her explain to me what is wrong the next time it appears. After the student self-corrects in front of me, I ignore the problem whenever it appears again, marking it for the student to deal with later. I also like to require them to keep a grammar log in which they record any errors they have repeatedly made, citing an example of the error, a correction of this error, and a self-derived rule for correcting the error that they can refer back to as they edit future texts. This again frees up time in conferences for larger issues and places the learning back in the hands of the student.

- Language Strategies:

1. *Prioritize*. Do not make the mistake of dealing with sentence level errors when there are larger

problems to be addressed. If there is not enough time to deal with major revisions, save the language issues for another conference.

2. *Read errors aloud.* By having students read an error aloud, we can help them develop an ear for error. We can also verify that the statement matches the intentions of the student.
3. *Use grammar logs.* Rather than going over every error, show students what is wrong with the first example of a repeated mistake and then have them on their own record, correct, and make a rule about every subsequent error like it in the paper. This technique helps them to develop their own sense of what is wrong with the error while freeing up time within the conference.

SAMPLE ESSAY AND CONFERENCE

In order to attempt to give a more concrete feel to the methods I have described, what follows is a sample ESL essay and a fictionalized account of how a conference on it might work. The essay is a real ESL essay that was brought to me from another class for me to tutor the student, and much of the conference that I am creating actually took place. I will be adding to certain parts of the conference in order to elaborate on potential trouble areas, in some ways idealizing both myself and the student. As you read through the conference and the essay, consider what you would do in similar circumstances. Not everything that I suggest would be appropriate for every ESL teacher, so if you disagree with what I have done in the conference, consider why you disagree and try to formulate your own unique approach to similar problems.

Pre-Conference Dialogue:

ME: Hi there. My name's Hal. What's your name?

STUDENT: I am Pat.

ME: Well hello Pat. What brings you to the Writing Center?

PAT: I have paper to fix.

ME: What needs fixing, Pat?

PAT: Everything. [Pat has effectively dodged my attempt to get him to express what areas of writing he needs to work on, which is fairly typical. His "everything" statement expresses his own fear that he has no control over his writing and a desire for me to simply tell him how to fix all of the problems he cannot identify on his own.]

ME: Why do you say that? [Redirecting the conversation so as to make him express the problem.]

PAT: My teacher say I need to work hard on paper to get okay grade. [Pat's real-world concern emerges].

ME: So you've had problems in the past on papers? [A mistake on my part since this is a yes/no question.]

PAT: Yes.

ME: What does your teacher say you have problems with? [Redirecting]

PAT: He say I cannot organize my sentences well. And that I need to tell about more stuff. [Since Pat is not my student, I used his teacher's comments on his writing to help him to express what issues he needs to consider].

ME: Do you think that these might be problems in whatever it is you are working on?

PAT: Maybe. It's hard to know what people already know about weddings.

ME: Is that what this paper is about? Weddings?

PAT: Yes. We have to give a talk about how my culture weds.

ME: Do you have to hand in your written speech, or do you just have to read it to the class?

PAT: We have to read it to class and give it to teacher.

ME: Did he give you a written topic assignment?

PAT: What?

ME: Did your teacher write out a question for you to answer? [My use of the term "topic assignment" confused Pat, calling for me to reformulate for his benefit.]

PAT: No. He just said aloud in class.

ME: What do you think he wants you to tell him about your culture's wedding practices? [Here I try to get Pat to reformulate his own understanding of his audiences expectations of content.]

PAT: I don't know.

ME: Well, why do you think he's making you write about it?

PAT: We read story about American wedding.

ME: Hmm. So are they different from your culture's way of getting married?

PAT: In some ways, yes. In some ways, no. I try to show in my paper.

ME: Oh, so you are supposed to compare the weddings in America and your own culture?

PAT: Yes.

ME: Who exactly are you going to be talking to? [I ask this question to make sure he is aware of his entire audience: the class and the teacher.]

PAT: The ESL class and the teacher.

ME: Okay. So we need to keep them in mind when we look over your paper.

PAT: Okay.

ME: How much do you think that they will know about your culture's wedding practices? [This question is designed to make him consider what he can assume his audience knows and does not know.]

PAT: Um . . . the other Koreans will know, but the Russians and Turks will not.

ME: Right. So keep in mind that you may have to explain some things that seem pretty obvious to you and the other Koreans, okay?

PAT: Okay.

ME: Good. Okay, then. What exactly do you want me to do here, Pat?

PAT: Read paper and fix it.

ME: Well, I'll tell you what. Let me make a copy of it and we'll both read it. You're the one who knows your teacher and what sorts of comments he makes. Plus, you're the one who knows about your culture; I wouldn't know if you were right or wrong about it.

PAT: Okay.

ME: As you read, be sure to mark things that you are worried about: grammar, organization, or places where you aren't sure it makes sense. Then we'll talk about what you might do to fix it.

PAT: Hmm.

[Here I make a quick copy of his paper and bring it back to him. Ideally, PAT would have brought two copies with him, but since he did not, I made the copy for him.]

ME: Okay, here we go. As we read, don't worry about what I'm writing. I'll be marking both good and bad things. I am more interested in what worries you and what things you think you've said particularly well. Okay?

PAT: Okay.

[Here is the actual essay. I have changed only a few items to address certain problems.]

The Korean Wedding

Hi, Eerybody.
Let me introduce you to the Korean wedding.
Even though a lot of old styles are now westernized, we still follow the traditional ways on WEDDING.
So I want to tell you everything about the wedding.

We perform modern wedding first , and then traditional one next.

For the modern part, the costume is the same as a American's dress.
But people don't speak English as you know.
And they present some money for the new couple instead of giving gift if they are not so familiar.
Many people, usually bigger than 200 people, attend the wedding to bless the couple.
We rent a professional hall, and some people rent church like myself.
Because we don't have enough space, like a garden or somewhere else.
And the worst problem is that people have to finish the wedding in 30 minutes for the next couple.
More ever many people marry on weekend, so the place is worse than crowded subway station.
Nowadays some people marry at night to get away from the damn mess.

We change the wedding dress from the modern one to the traditional one.

Then our old style wedding begins.

For the traditional wedding, parents and close relatives attend the wedding.

The procedure of wedding is like this.

First, the bride and groom bow to groom's parents.
The groom bows on his knees with putting his hands up on his forehead,
The bride sits down with her legs crossed and puts her hands up on her forehead.
The bride need a helper, because her bow is too difficult to stand up.
The bride really need to practice not to spoil the wedding.

Second, the couple serve some wine to the parents.
And then the parents give some money to the bride with some blessing words.

And the parents throw some chestnut and candy to the couple as a meaning of expecting their thriving.

Third, the couple bow to the relatives.

Forth, two families bow and introduce themselves.

The traditional wedding also takes about 30 minutes.

After the wedding, we go to the party which is prepared at another place. But we don't dance, because we are gentle people.

There is a rule that I learned from the wedding.

Don't smile too much, just gentle and serious.
If a bride smiles too much, she will deliver a girl.
And the problem is that the parent-in-law really expect a son.

[I finished reading the paper before Pat did. While he continued to mark, I considered what his major difficulties were. While at first glance, the paper seems random, there is an organization to it:

- There are two separate Korean wedding ceremonies, the modern and the traditional.
- The modern is much like an American wedding, but space is a major problem.

- The traditional one is much smaller and more family oriented. It has an elaborate ceremony.

What Pat needs is to use paragraphs, introduce the point of his talk more fully, and offer a contrast against American weddings (since that is what his audience is expecting). Pat could also use more details and could give a context for his "no smiling" comments at the end. Language-wise, his use of the term "wedding" in the third sentence seems odd, and there are some minor article problems and other grammatical issues. In this paper, however, they do not seem particularly debilitating to the creation of meaning.]

ME: Okay, Pat. How is it?

PAT: Really bad.

ME: Really? I'm surprised to hear you say that. What's wrong with it?

PAT: I do not know. It sound wrong.

ME: What do you mean?

PAT: I do not know. I just do not like it.

ME: Can you point to any specific areas that bothered you?

PAT: [Hesitating.] Here. [Points to the fourth line: "We perform modern wedding first , and then traditional one next."]

ME: Good. I marked that too. [This comment reassures him that he is right and reinforces his own judgement.] What's wrong with it?

PAT: I don't know. It seems too small.

ME: Too small? I don't understand.

PAT: I need to say more.

ME: You're right, Pat. But why do you say that?

PAT: It's like . . . I just talk. I do not prepare people, like the stories we read for class. I need to say more . . . I don't know. [Pat seems to be frustrated that he cannot explain himself.]

ME: I think you're right, Pat. Most of the things you'll read in the United States introduce their main point and give you a reason why they want to talk about something, right?

PAT: Right. Introduction. [Pat is recalling a word he's heard in his ESL class which had escaped him earlier. Since he is familiar with the term, I do not spend a lot of time explaining to him what it is.]

ME: So why are you talking about Korean weddings?

PAT: Because the teacher made us.

ME: [I Laugh.] Okay, true, but what are you supposed to be reacting to as you write this speech?

PAT: The stories we read about American wedding.

ME: Right. So how will you set this up?

PAT: Hmm . . . I am not sure. I do not know.

ME: Well, are American weddings different from Korean weddings?

PAT: Yes.

ME: How?

PAT: We are similar because of modern wedding part, but different because of traditional part. Americans do not have traditional part.

ME: Okay then. So Americans are different, but in some ways they are the same as Koreans?

PAT: Yes. Maybe. I'm not sure.

ME: Well, what's the point of an introduction?

PAT: To tell why I talk about what I am talking about.

ME: Right. So which is more important to you, the idea that Korean weddings are different from American weddings, or that they have some similarities? [Here, we are in effect discussing potential openings.]

PAT: Both.

ME: Then talk about that here. [I point to the fourth sentence when I say this.]

PAT: Okay.

ME: So how might you do that?

PAT: [Surprised that I asked.] Hmm . . . I am not sure.

ME: Can you link the idea that Korea and America are both similar and different to any of the ideas that you've already said before that sentence?

PAT: [Looking at paper.] Hmm . . . here? [Pat points to third sentence which details how Korean weddings are both Westernized and traditional.]

ME: Good. How can you link the two?

PAT: Maybe I can talk about how western wedding is like modern wedding, which is how our weddings are like Americans', and then I can talk about how we still do traditions too.

ME: Great! I like that quite a bit, and I'm glad you came up with the idea. You may also want to make reference to the story you just read to let your audience know what prompted you to think about how different cultures get married.

PAT: Why? [Pat has put me on the spot, partially because he does not fully understand

what I've suggested and partially because it is a bit vague.]

ME: Well, what if your audience has had the same experience or wants to have the same experience that prompted you to start thinking like this in the first place? Wouldn't it help your essay if you could remind them of how they felt when they read the same story?

PAT: Why?

ME: Hmm [I desperately need a concrete example] . . . Do you have a copy of the story that you first read about weddings?

PAT: [Nodding.] Yes. Let me show it to you. [It is a photocopy of a newspaper column about wedding memories prompted by seeing *Father of the Bride*.]

ME: Okay. Have you seen *Father of the Bride*?

PAT: Yes. It was okay.

ME: Did you remember it when you read this article?

PAT: Yes.

ME: So you knew what she was talking about when she started making her case?

PAT: Yes, of course. The film made her remember how little money she spent on her own wedding and how crazy costs are today.

ME: Good. Would you have read the article on your own if you didn't know about the movie?

PAT: Maybe. I do not know.

ME: Well, in America, we like to know the reason why someone starts to think about something, the context for their thoughts. If we share them or if we've ever had a similar thought, it makes accepting her line of thought easier.

PAT: Oh. So maybe I can refer to *Father of the Bride* too?

ME: Well, maybe, but you might be accused of stealing her idea.

PAT: Then what should I do?

ME: You could make reference to her story about the movie and her own thoughts about how different things were for her way back in her childhood.

PAT: Hmm . . . like things are different in Korea?

ME: Exactly.

PAT: Okay. [He makes a note of it on the draft. I would have made him make a note if he did not do it himself.]

ME: I do wonder, though, about something.

PAT: What?

ME: Look at the fourth sentence. How many ceremonies are taking place?

PAT: Two. [Pat looks at me as if he is surprised I don't know this.]

ME: I figured that out from the rest of the speech, but it's not clear at that point.

PAT: But they will hear the rest of it and will figure it out. [PAT doesn't see a need to clarify this point any].

ME: True, but American audiences like your teacher will expect you to be a little more explicit up front about the presence of two ceremonies. How can you clarify this to your audience up front? [At this point, since PAT has absolutely no interest in this concern, it is very likely that he will not revise the paragraph to address this problem because thus far, I have told him what was wrong without negotiating with him about it.]

PAT: I do not know. Maybe say "two ceremonies"?

ME: Good. Or maybe you can take it further with a word that means separate or unique or different.

PAT: [Writes down words.] Okay.

[Depending on time limitations, I might have asked PAT to actually attempt to write a new opening incorporating these thoughts to reinforce the need to revise and to use his "two ceremonies" idea. But since we do not have the time, we move on.]

ME: Okay, what else bothered you?

PAT: Just the way I say things. How is grammar?

ME: Oh, there were a few problems, but nothing major. I do want to ask you a question, though. You have to hand in a written copy of this speech, right?

PAT: Yes.

ME: How many American stories or essays have you read that look like this does?

PAT: What do you mean?

ME: Where are your paragraphs?

PAT: [Smiling.] Oh. I forgot. I just wanted to write down my ideas.

ME: Well, that's fine for a draft, but when you hand this in, you are going to have to have paragraphs. How do you think you'll break them up?

PAT: I am not sure.

ME: Okay, well, let's take a look at what I marked. [PAT moves closer so that he can see what I have marked]. Okay, before we look at this, let me tell you what these marks mean. A check mark like this [I point to an example] means that I like what you said or how you said it. It means you did very well and I wanted you to know that as a reader, I liked how you handled that

section of the text. If I underline something [I point to an example], it means you have an error and that it probably is grammatical. If you've used the wrong word, I'll have written "word choice" over the word. You got that?

PAT: Yes.

ME: Good. Okay, then here's what I liked about your essay: you really seemed to group things together well. I like how you talk about ideas in clusters. Like this [I point to his discussion on the actual ceremony for the traditional wedding]. What I'd like you to do is to take a few minutes and mark on your draft facts that you think should go together in paragraphs.

PAT: How?

ME: Right there on the draft. Draw a line connecting ideas that should go together in a paragraph. [Pat takes a minute and marks a few lines, connecting the space sentences, the ceremony sentences, and the sentences on smiling. The rest are not connected.]

PAT: Okay, here. I do not know what to do with the other sentences.

ME: Good job. It looks like you've marked the clumps of sentences I marked as well. But what about those other sentences?

PAT: I don't know. They do not match the others.

ME: True. I particularly was surprised by the randomness of "But people don't speak English as you know."

PAT: Oh. That was a joke. [Here Pat has taken into account the fact that this text is meant to be delivered orally and has decided to add humor to it. I completely missed this on my reading and am impressed with it.]

ME: Oh. Hey, that's pretty good. I get so used to reading all of these serious things

that I forget to read for humor. Go ahead and keep it, but you may have to work it in towards the end of the paragraph.

PAT: Okay.

ME: Good. With the rest of these sentences, perhaps you could either make a new paragraph, cut them out, or try to rework the overall point of the paragraph to connect the ideas.

PAT: How can I do that?

ME: Well, let's back up a minute and think about what you are trying to do overall. What is the point of the speech?

PAT: To show that Korean weddings are both similar and different from American weddings.

ME: Good. Write that down. [I hand him a 3"x5" index card for him to write on.]

PAT: Okay.

ME: Now, put the card next to the sentences you want to group into a paragraph. How can you connect these ideas to support your main point?

PAT: [Pat takes a minute to compare different parts of the paper to the card. He points to the section of sentences about the modern ceremony]. Maybe I say modern Korean wedding like American wedding in size and numbers?

ME: Excellent. What about afterwards?

PAT: [Pat moves his thesis card and looks at rest of paper]. Maybe I can say how we are different in traditional wedding because we are quiet.

ME: What do you mean?

PAT: We do not say much in traditional ceremony. All is done through movements.

ME: Good! I actually had not thought of that idea, but you are right. What a great idea. Now how will you work the idea of not smiling into a paragraph?

PAT: I do not know. Maybe I say we are quiet because of baby problem.

ME: I like that too. This sounds like you've got the basic ideas down. You may want to write them down real quick.

PAT: Okay. [Writes]

ME: Okay, we are almost out of time, but I want to ask you this: what do you think your class and your teacher expect to hear?

PAT: Uh, they probably expect to hear how Korean wedding is different and same to American weddings.

ME: Good. Now, what about the opening?

PAT: I need to explain why I am talking about it.

ME: Good. Don't be afraid to make reference to the stories you read. And what about the rest of the speech?

PAT: I need to always tell about how my example shows differences or similarities. [Here Pat is restating his plan for revision.]

ME: Good. Okay, any last minute questions?

PAT: I think I am fine.

ME: Glad to hear it. Good luck. If you want, come back and show me another draft.

PAT: Okay.

[In this conference, time limitations prevented me from addressing specific grammatical concerns or potential additions to details. We did, however, address Pat's primary problems, negotiated

solutions together so that the majority of his revision plan was actually self-generated, and we recapped his plan so that he can hopefully remember what we discussed when he sits down to revise.]

CONCLUSION

At the heart of all good writing conferences, be they with college students, adult literacy students, or ESL students, lies a negotiation of revision strategies between the student and the teacher. In the case of ESL students, because they have so many obstacles between them and successful writing, we as ESL teachers need to bring to these negotiations a willingness to offer a bit more than we might otherwise offer native-speaker students. By getting specific with our ESL students as to what their options are, we are helping to fill in the gap between their L_1 and their L_2 by providing concrete examples upon which they can model their own revisions. By offering them these models instead of simply telling them "this is the way to fix it," we can offer ESL students the background information they need to determine their own revisions without dominating their texts and meaning. We likewise increase their own personal investment in both the revision process, the final product, and their own acquisition of English by making their choices the centerpiece of their learning process. By making conferences a comfortable place where students can engage in negotiated problem-solving under the guidance of their teachers, students will gradually begin to build the skills they will need to write in English on their own without assistance, which we should always remember is our ultimate goal.

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Appendix B: Model of Audience Expectations

When a student has particular problems with understanding what the audience expectations of a certain type of writing are, I like to work with the student to draw up a profile of the type of text in question. Working with samples provided by the student from their actual work or academic environment, together the student and I discuss why the author chose to write the way he or she did and develop rules that seem to govern how such a text is created. In general, such a profile deals with only basic elements like these:

- Length
- Level of formality
- Wordiness
- Types of evidence
- Organization

One of my students came to me upset that she could not write an inter-office memo correctly. Even thought she had read hundreds of them, she had never tried to analyze how they worked. Using ten samples, we discussed how memos worked in her office and drew up the following profile:

Office Memo Profile

- Length: Short (less than one page), with one to three paragraphs.
- Level of formality: Generally formal, but with close co-workers one can be a bit more informal. Memos to clients, unfamiliar co-workers, or supervisors remain very formal.
- Wordiness: Be as brief as possible, with as little "flowery" language as possible. Transitions are not essential. State your point, give the pertinent facts, and end it.
- Types of evidence: Give only the most essential information, such as costs, specific names of people or products, and dates. Whenever possible, summarize what someone said rather

than quote. If responding to a specific request for details, give more details than normal.

- Organization: Begin with context (responding to someone's memo, requesting information/meeting, or providing a "newsflash"). Follow with specific request or response, giving only the most essential facts. Give any concerns or potential problems after facts are presented. Give a specific date needed by if relevant. Then close with a polite phrase ("Thanks for taking the time to do this").

The above profile was actually generated by the student with some prompting by me. Attached to this profile we put a copy of a memo that demonstrated these qualities. With this guide in hand, the student's memos improved quite rapidly in a manner of weeks to the point where the guide was no longer needed. It worked because it was derived from authentic source texts and was developed by the student with my help rather than being a guide I simply gave her.

Appendix C: Transitions

The following examples of transitions have been taken from H. Ramsey Fowler's *The Little, Brown Handbook* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1980). I have found simply providing a list of such words and phrases gives both ESL and native-speaker students a concrete reference to use when they try to develop a repertoire of transitional elements.

Transitions to add or show sequence:

again, also, and, and then, besides, equally important, finally, first, furthermore, further, in addition, in the first place, last, moreover, next, second, too

Transitions to compare:

in the same way, likewise, similarly

Transitions to show contrast:

although, and yet, but, but at the same time, despite, even so, even though, for all that, however, in contrast, in spite of, nevertheless, notwithstanding, on the contrary, on the other hand, regardless, still, though, yet

Transitions to give examples or intensify:

after all, an illustration of, for example, for instance, indeed, in fact, it is true, of course, specifically, that is, to illustrate, truly

Transitions to indicate place:

above, adjacent to, below, elsewhere, farther on, here, near, nearby, on the other side, opposite to, there, to the east, to the left

Transitions to indicate time:

after a while, afterward, as long as, as soon as, at last, at length, at that time, before, earlier, formerly, immediately, in the meantime, in the past, lately, later, meanwhile, now, presently, shortly, simultaneously, since, so far, soon, subsequently, then, thereafter, until, until now, when

Transitions to repeat, summarize or conclude:

all in all, altogether, as has been said, in brief, in conclusion, in other words, in particular, in short, in simpler terms, in summary, on the whole, that is, to put it differently, to summarize

Transitions to show cause or effect:

accordingly, as a result, because, consequently, for this purpose, hence, otherwise, since, then, therefore, thereupon, thus, to this end, with this object

Conjunctive adverbs:

accordingly, also, besides, consequently, furthermore, hence, however, indeed, instead, moreover, nonetheless, otherwise, still, then, therefore, thus